



Network News

Your Arizona Parent School Connection



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What's New?

by Barb Ross

Please join the Parent Information Network (PIN) in welcoming the new PIN Specialist for Gila and Pinal Counties, Jessie Geroux. Jessie resides in Apache Junction with her husband and two children. Jessie states, "I am excited and proud to be the newest member of the Parent Information Network team. It is an honor to give back to a program that has helped me along the way and I am passionate about equipping families and schools to help children with special education needs."

**Please note the new email addresses for the Parent Information Network Specialists on page four.*

Monitoring Your Child's Progress

by Teri Rademacher



Progress reports are one of the most under utilized pieces of information that parents receive regarding their child's special education services. Yet, they are the very tool used by educators and service providers to communicate a child's progress towards meeting the goals outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Monitoring progress reports is important and provides parents with information that is critical to evaluating the effectiveness of their child's educational programming.

Federal law, IDEA 2004, states that an IEP shall include a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goal(s) will be measured and when periodic reports on that progress will be provided. [Section 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(III)] Well developed goals in a student's IEP will identify the skill that a student is working on, the anticipated growth in one years time, how that growth will be measured and with what tool. The IEP also states how often that progress will be reported to the child's parent(s)/guardian(s). This reporting frequency should not be any less than that of the child's typical peers. For example, if students attending Arizona Junior High School receive report cards every nine weeks, then students with an IEP should receive progress reports, on their IEP goals, at the same time.

Parents should anticipate receiving progress reports from their child's special education teacher; but, they should also receive

them from related service providers if they are responsible for goals in the child's IEP. For example, if a student receives speech services and has instructional aide support for Math; parents should receive a progress report from the speech and language therapist in addition to the one from the special education teacher. Progress needs to be reported on all goals in the IEP.

A standard format for progress reports is not mandated by IDEA 2004 and consequently the format varies depending on the school the child attends. Parents may want to seize the opportunity, at the IEP meeting, to ask about the progress report: what it looks like, the definition of any codes that might appear on it, how (U.S. mail, student backpack) and when (quarterly, every 6 weeks) they should receive it. If a parent does not receive the progress report(s), they should contact the teacher and request a copy.

One way that parents are able to determine the effectiveness of their child's IEP is by monitoring progress reports. If a child is not showing growth on a particular goal and the progress report states that it isn't anticipated that the child will be able to achieve that goal, then it would be appropriate to request an IEP meeting to discuss other options. The goal may not be appropriate and need to be changed or perhaps further evaluation needs to be done. The IEP team also might identify some additional accommodations and/or modifications that may be helpful. Should a parent receive a progress report that states that a child is making progress towards or has met a goal and they happen to disagree, they may request to see the information that the teacher or therapist has collected which documents the progress.

The Parent Information Network Clearinghouse (PINC) contains several documents that talk about measurable goals and monitoring progress. *Measurable Goals (SE10)* provides an overview of what goals should look like and explains why each piece is important. Another resource found in the PINC is the *Sample Letter: Education Records Request (SE16)* which can be used when requesting progress reports. The *Fundamentals of Letter Writing (SE08)* is a document that talks about effective ways to communicate in writing. *The Importance of Good Communication Skills (SA05)* outlines the special education process and pro-active steps parents should take when "monitoring" their child's special education. Using effective communication skills, both written and verbal, is vital to a child's educational success. These resources are available online at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals or by contacting your PIN Specialist (contact information on page 4).

Measurable Goals

by Barb Ross

Measurable Goals (SE10) is one of the recent additions to the Parent Information Network Clearinghouse (PINC). This important new document will help parents understand this essential component of their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Goals provide the basis for instruction, describing what a child needs related to their disability. Goals, contained in an IEP, describe what a student can reasonably expect to accomplish within one year. Evaluations and assessments provide the information needed for writing the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) of the IEP. The PLAAFP serves as the basis for selecting and writing the student's IEP goals. The PLAAFP should include the strengths of the child as well as the needs. The PLAAFP should consider the child's level of functioning in these five areas: academic, cognitive, communication, physical, and social/emotional. What makes a good goal? A goal that describes what the child will do; a goal that is functional, observable, meaningful, achievable, measurable and relates to or aligns with the grade level of the State Academic Standards.

An easy acronym to remember when writing appropriate goals is **SMART**. **SMART** stands for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable (but challenging)
- Relevant
- Timed

- Specific
 - ❖ Goals must be directly related to the student's needs that are included in the PLAAFP, the most recent evaluation and the discussion by the IEP team.
 - ❖ Goals must align with on-grade-level State Academic Standards (the general curriculum).

- Measurable = Quantifiable
 - ❖ This usually means numbers in some form.
 - ❖ Percentages
 - ❖ Words per minute
 - ❖ Time/amount
 - ❖ Scores

An example of a measurable goal would be John (a kindergartener) will increase his ability to sequence stories using 3–4 pictures by 30% above baseline as measured by teacher observation and data collection. Strand 3, Concept 2. (His baseline as written in the PLAAFP is 45 percent.)

- Achievable but challenging
 - ❖ Goals should be realistic but a stretch for the student.
 - ❖ Goals should not be a wish list.

- Relevant
 - ❖ Goals should be relevant to the student.
 - ❖ Goals should be relevant to the current baseline.
 - ❖ Goals should be aligned within the State grade level Academic Standards.

- Timed
 - ❖ Achievable within one year
 - ❖ Progressively measurable on a schedule
 - ❖ Supportive of post-school goals
 - This is beneficial for all students, regardless of age, but mandatory for students 16 years and older.

Another factor to consider with the measurability of goals is the collection method. Keep it simple and realistic for the teacher. Failure to measure defeats even the best goals. Keep in mind setting too many priorities means nothing is a priority.

(Excerpted from the WebGoal presentation available in its entirety online at www.azed.gov/ess; bottom of page under Resources —presentations drop down list.)

Arizona Legislative Update

by Teri Rademacher



By the conclusion of the 48th Legislative Session of the Arizona State Legislature, a significant change to the powers of a school district's governing board or county school superintendent passed, affecting students with disabilities. The Legislature of the State of Arizona amended Section 15-764 (A)(1) of the Arizona Revised Statutes to read that the governing board of each school district or the county school superintendent shall:

“Provide special education and related services to all children with disabilities and make such programs available to all children with disabilities who are at least three years but less than twenty-two years of age, except that a person who is being provided special education services at the time the person reaches twenty-two years of age shall continue to receive special education services from that school district until the end of that school year.”

The good news is that students reaching the age of 22 no longer have to leave school prior to the end of the school year because they age-out (reach their 22nd birthday). They can continue their education and participate in the end of the school year activities. This also provides additional time for students to continue to work on their transition goals, preparing for life after high school.

Newly passed legislation from the Arizona State Legislature becomes law 90 days after the conclusion of the session. The 48th Legislative Session concluded on June 20, 2007 which means that the newly passed legislation went into effect on Wednesday, September 19, 2007.

Consequently, students reaching the age of 22 prior to September 19th are not able to take advantage of this amendment. For more information, or to read the entire amendment visit the Arizona Legislature's website at www.azleg.gov. Using the menu located on the left hand side of the home page, find the section titled *Legislative Session* and click on *Session Laws*. Once the list of laws appears, you can scroll down to Chapter 0201 and read the amendment in its entirety.

The 2007-2008 PIN Clearinghouse

by Barb Ross

The PIN Clearinghouse underwent considerable revision this summer. For those of you who regularly use this important resource you may notice the deletion of several documents. The Parent Information Network strives to provide information that is relevant and reflects the needs of the parents of children with disabilities. Although the documents that were deleted may be missed by some, they are documents that were rarely requested. The good news is, the deletions made room for the addition of many new documents that are instrumental in helping parents to actively participate in their child's special education.

We added the Assistive Technology (AT) section that includes the new document *Assistive Technology (AT01)*. This document is a comprehensive overview of assistive technology that explains everything from definitions to resources.

The Special Education (SE) section has expanded to incorporate tools that help parents effectively communicate with their schools and IEP teams as well as following the chain of command. *Fundamentals of Letter Writing (SE08)* will aid parents in developing or honing this essential communication skill. Also see Sample Letters: *Comprehensive Evaluation Request (SE11)*, *Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) Request (SE12)*, *Assistive Technology Evaluation Request (SE13)*, *Functional Behavioral Assessment Request (SE14)*, *Three-Year Re-evaluation Request (SE15)* and *Educational Records Request (SE16)*.

Another important skill for parents to learn is organizing and keeping records. Documenting your communication, calls and meetings will help clarify issues later on and express your concerns to assist in the problem solving process. Be sure to check out *Phone Log: Documenting Your Contacts (SE17)* and *IEP Meeting Documentation (SE18)*.

The Parent Information Network added an additional resource for transitioning to adulthood called the *Transition Guide*. The guide is a basic footprint to help students with disabilities explore post-secondary options. The guide can be personalized and changed as they move through the transitioning process and hone their interests and skills. The Guide is available on CD from your PIN specialist or can be downloaded from the PIN website.

All in all, you will find the new line-up of the Parent Information Network Clearinghouse for 2007-2008 one of the best yet! These resources are available online at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals or by contacting your regional PIN Specialist (contact information on page 4).

Arizona Parent Satisfaction Survey Update

by Teri Rademacher



"I am considered an equal partner with teachers and other professionals in planning my child's program. The school communicates regularly with me regarding my child's progress on IEP goals." These are just a couple of the types of statements that can be found on the Arizona Parent Satisfaction Survey.

Parents of students receiving special education services are asked to respond to each of the 25 statements on the survey by selecting one of the following: very strongly agree, strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and very strongly disagree. Another school year has begun and the list of schools required to participate for 2007-2008 can be found online at www.azed.gov/ess/parentsurvey or by contacting your PIN Specialist (contact information on page 4).

Schools required to participate in the survey are determined by the year of their monitoring cycle. The Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services (ADE/ESS) monitors or checks schools to make sure they are following State and Federal laws. The ADE/ESS uses a 6-year monitoring cycle and schools are required to conduct certain activities based upon where they are in that 6-year cycle. Schools in Year 2 of the monitoring cycle are required to conduct the Arizona Parent Satisfaction Survey. Some schools, those with a student enrollment of 50,000 or more, are required to conduct the survey every year.

Results from the survey are updated monthly and posted on the ADE/ESS website at www.azed.gov/ess/parentsurvey. Schools with less than a 10 percent response rate will be required to repeat the survey during Year 4 of their monitoring cycle. This threshold is designed to ensure that the sampling group is large enough to provide valid results.

Schools receive the results from the surveys completed by their parents and are encouraged to use this information to make changes to the way they facilitate parent involvement based on the outcomes. Using the survey results, they develop their own strategies to address areas that need improvement and celebrate areas where they are experiencing success. It is vital that schools get a clear picture of how effectively they are facilitating parental involvement. That is why it is so important that parents take this opportunity to participate in the survey.

If you receive the *Network News* on a regular basis, you may recall the article published in the Winter 2007 edition about the Arizona Parent Satisfaction Survey. This article provided a detailed overview of the survey's development, how parents can participate, and the process. If you would like to read the article, you can contact your PIN Specialist or find it online at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals.

Not sure if you're coming or going? Looking for information and resources about disabilities but don't know where to turn? Visit the Enhancing Arizona's Parent Network's website at:

www.azeapn.org



Name or Address Change?

Network News goes out to over 4,000 parents, service providers, agencies and schools. We need to continuously update our mailing list to stay current. We would also like to know if you are a parent, provider, or educator. In addition, you now have the option to receive your copy of the *Network News* via the U. S. Mail or electronically via e-mail.

The Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services will be mailing out postcards in an effort to verify your contact information. Be sure to update and/or correct your information and note your preference for U. S. Mail or email and return it as soon as possible. You may also contact your Regional PIN Specialist below or call 928-679-8102.

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For more information contact the PIN/Child Find Coordinator: Becky Raabe, (928) 679-8106, or Becky.Raabe@azed.gov.

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